

Coach Wilson always told me during basketball season that I have a target on my back, but I never thought that there'd ever come a time where I'd have a real one. I had just finished my basketball game when I found out about the threat made to our school by Jack Sawyer.

In disbelief, I had driven around with my mom debating whether or not I should go to school the next day. As crazy and scary as it seemed, I walked out my door the following morning to head to FHU. Walking in, I became extremely uncomfortable with my surroundings, not because of the abundance of worried people, but because of the lack of students there. At that point I didn't know what to think.

As this situation has progressed, I dread going to further my education. This is something I had never felt before because believe it or not, I was one that actually missed being at school during the summer. I have become increasingly frustrated with this situation, as it has taken over my senior year. I will not have many good memories to look back on from this year because of this, and I hope that future seniors won't have the same kind of year we have had.

As a student, I shouldn't have to worry about whether I am going to make it home at the end of the day nor should anyone else. I should be worrying about the test on Friday or the homework assignment due the next day that I haven't even started. Now, everyday as I walk out my door, the fear of going to school hits me hard. I drive into the parking lot making sure that there isn't anyone that looks suspicious sitting in their car. I look behind me if I'm alone as I walk into school. I fear getting there early, wondering if there's going to be someone waiting for me. Each room I enter now, I think of what I would do and where I would go if something did happen. I've gone through so many scenarios in my head, yet I still can't seem to wrap my mind around this one. I've known many of the adults in the building since I was five years old and I've gotten close with many of them as the years have gone on. Even though I am leaving, they will continue to stay, teaching and fighting for their students. I was so excited to be leaving school, I still am, but now worry washes over me every time I think about it. I worry about the people I've gotten close with when they're at school as we get more disappointing news about Jack and I worry even more when they're at home and I don't know how they are feeling.

I worry about all of the students. I worry about the ones who don't have a support system at home. I worry about the ones who are the outcasts. I worry about the kids who do have a support system and choose not to use it. For many, school is their only "safe" place, and now even that has been destroyed by a boy who has mental health issues and a government who doesn't have a law in place to protect us. I'm going to college for nursing this fall, and after I graduate I don't want to be treating school shooting victims because nothing was done to prevent it from happening even though people spoke up. This case should be what causes the change and protects the kids, teachers, and citizens from being put in those positions.

I urge you to think about putting something in place to protect people in future cases like this. I and my fellow Slaters should not have to worry about whether or not we are going to make it home at the end of the day. There shouldn't be 400 kids writing their wills at the ages from 14 to 18 because of the lack of law protection. I want to thank Officer Scott, the Fair Haven Police, Vermont State Police, Rose Kennedy, the administration, and the people who have stepped up to help make the school feel like a safer place. Now, I want you all to remember one thing: Once a Slater, always a Slater.